

**Venue:**  
Community

**Goal:**  
Eliminate Exposure  
to Secondhand Smoke

**Activity:**  
C4.03 Policy  
Education – Public  
Venues & Worksites

**Contact Information:**  
Patricia Coloma  
**Organization:**  
TOGETHER!/  
Tobacco Free Thurston County  
**Phone:**  
(360) 493-2230 ext.15  
**Email:**  
pcoloma@thurstontogether.org



- **Population (Census 2000): 207,355**
- **Total Households (Census 2000): 81,625**
- **Adult Cigarette Smoking Prevalence (BRFSS/ATS 2003): 25 percent**
- **Estimated Number of Adult Cigarette Smokers (DOH 2004): 38,300**
- **Number of Students (OSPI 2003): 38,102**
- **Eighth Grade Cigarette Smoking Prevalence (HYS 2002): 9 percent**

# Smoke-free Parks – Thurston County

## Project Description

**TOGETHER! Tobacco Free Thurston County attempted to establish an enforceable smoking ban in all Olympia city parks.**



### Inputs

#### Rationale

Two types of smoking bans have been used by other jurisdictions: the enforceable ban and the voluntary ban. Tobacco Free Thurston County decided to support an enforceable ban in Olympia in an effort to achieve compliance by empowering residents and law enforcement to take action.

The three major reasons to support a smoking ban are the health, environmental, and social impacts of smoking on the public.

- Secondhand smoke has been scientifically proven to seriously hamper respiratory function and pulmonary development in children, causing hundreds of thousands of cases of pneumonia, bronchitis, asthma, and middle ear infections, as well as sudden infant death syndrome.
- Smoking produces litter that can be harmful to children and animals.
- Enacting smoking bans in public parks provides more examples of smoke-free environments and reduces the number of smoking role models. They also provide an opportunity to inform the community about the impact of smoking in public places.

#### Target Audiences

- Primary: City of Olympia policymakers and city council members
- Secondary: Smokers and children using the parks

#### Resources

##### Staff

- Two TOGETHER! Tobacco Free Thurston County staff members
- About 20-30 hours were spent.

##### Funding

- Staff time and printing came from state Tobacco Prevention and Control Program funding.

##### Partnerships

- Olympia parks and recreation department ordered and paid for signs.

### Activities

1. A concerned community member submitted a signed petition with more than 200 signatures to have the Olympia City Council discuss a smoking ban in city parks. The city council's office asked Tobacco Free Thurston County to provide information on secondhand smoke and smoking bans instituted by other jurisdictions.
2. State and local secondhand smoke data were reviewed and research was conducted on smoke-free park efforts in Washington and nationwide.
3. Findings were reported to the Olympia city council. Tobacco Free Thurston County made a proposal for the council to enact an enforceable smoking ban in city parks.
4. Two articles were published in the Olympian newspaper. The first article was about the community member who collected the signatures and the second article was about the city council and the ban.

### Outputs

1. The Olympia City Council chose to implement a voluntary ban instead of an enforceable ban.
2. Tobacco Free Thurston County and Olympia parks and recreation worked together to order signs and get them placed into the parks.
3. One sign was put up near each of the playgrounds in Olympia parks for a total of eight signs throughout the city.
4. The city council and Olympia parks and recreation department agreed to run a trial voluntary ban for one year. When the year ends, the city will determine if there should be no ban at all, continue with the voluntary ban, or go to an enforceable ban.
5. Tobacco Free Thurston County's position as a viable community resource is now visible to the Olympia City Council and they have asked us to contact the other municipality parks in Thurston County.



## Evaluation

- Almost all Thurston County residents strongly agree that all children should be protected from secondhand smoke (91 percent  $\pm$  3 percent, ATS 2002).
- More than half of Thurston County residents strongly agree that the city or town where they live should establish as many strong rules and laws as possible to protect nonsmokers, including children, from secondhand smoke (56 percent  $\pm$  6 percent, ATS 2002).
- Almost three-fifths of Thurston County residents agree that smoking should be completely banned in outdoor public areas where children may be present (58 percent  $\pm$  6 percent, ATS 2003 preliminary data).

## Lessons Learned

People may not support a ban on smoking despite the facts that:

- About 80 percent of Washingtonians do not smoke.
- More than 60 percent find secondhand smoke annoying.
- Almost 90 percent agree that all children could be protected from secondhand smoke.

To achieve community support, justification for bans should focus on the health, environment, and social impacts of smoking.

Even if community readiness for a public smoking ban in parks exists, enforcement still may be an issue. To make an enforceable ban work, it is necessary to get support from a number of key players including the city council, the police, and the parks and recreation department.

We would definitely do this project again and we would recommend it to others.